

# The Relationship Between Faculty Members' Organizational Support Perceptions and Personal Growth Initiative Levels, The Mediating Role of General Self-Efficacy

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## Abstract:

The aims of this study were to investigate the relationship between organizational support perceptions and personal growth initiative levels of the faculty members working in Turkey and to examine the effect of self-efficacy perceptions in this relationship. The study was designed as a relational survey model. 346 faculty members from public universities in Turkey comprised the participants. The data was collected with General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), Perceived Organizational Support Scale (POSS), Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II (PGIS-II). Descriptive analyses and structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to examine the structural relations among the variables. It was observed that faculty members' organizational support perceptions had a significant direct effect on their personal growth initiative levels; organizational support perceptions had a significant effect on general self-efficacy beliefs; and the effect of general self-efficacy beliefs on personal growth initiative levels was significant. It was evidenced that faculty members' self-efficacy beliefs fully mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and personal growth initiative levels. These results are in line with the principles of Organizational Support Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. More research explaining the effect of organizational factors on self-efficacy and personal growth initiative is needed.

## Keywords:

Faculty members, Organizational support, Personal growth initiative, Self-efficacy, SEM

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## INTRODUCTION

In work life, in the realm of career development, individual career development initiations have gained significance and have been replacing the organization-based career development models. As work life gets more competitive, career development becomes more dependent on employees than on organizations. It might be said that the organizations expect their employees themselves to take steps to improve their careers. That is why, personal growth initiation, which means a positive and proactive stance towards change and constant personal development (Robitschek, 1998) has great potential to become an important concept in the human resource and organizational behavior fields. In addition to the burden placed upon the employees' shoulders by the competitive climate of today's work life, organizations might lack the resources to provide a wide range of development models addressing different needs of each and every employee, and even if they do it might be quite impractical to implement that wide range of models. Especially at the organizations where the expertise fields of the employees display a great deal of variety, such as the higher education institutions, career development models provided by the organizations might not meet the developmental aspirations the employees crave. Besides, a desire for constant development and renewal might be seen as a natural requirement of employment in higher education institutions whose employees are mostly academicians. Because in order to reach the tremendous speed of scientific research, the existence of personal interest and effort to grow are the qualities that one must to have. This is the reason why it has great importance for faculty members to put their own growth initiation skills into practice. Along with meeting employees' professional needs, personal growth initiative has an influence on an array of organizational outcomes. The research shows that personal growth initiative has an effect on personal and organizational outcomes as academic success (Matsuo, 2019), positive affection (Malik et al., 2013), career exploration and professional identity (Robitschek, 1999; Shorey et al., 2007), determination, problem-based management and goal setting (Shorey et al., 2007).

When professional requirements, personal and organizational outcomes are taken into consideration, it is critical to understand the factors that might have an influence on personal growth initiative. Previous research has established that person-organization fit, work empowerment and authentic leadership (Joo et al., 2020), impression management (Madan and Srivastava, 2017), self-efficiency and risk-taking behavior (Ogunyemi and Mabekoje, 2007) are the possible antecedents of personal growth initiative. In the frame of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) it can be assumed that organizational support might as well be one of the factors that has influence on personal growth initiative. The employees who feel the support of the organization would have a high opinion about their work and would be more motivated to put more effort into personal growth, which contributes to the organization. The literature has already documented the positive outcomes of organizational support. It might increase organizational commitment (Boz et al., 2017) and performance (Turunç and Çelik, 2010), decrease turnover intent (Fındıklı, 2014); predict

higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (Claudia, 2018). Thus, it is believed that organizational support will influence the employees' proactive stances towards the constant growth and change.

The mechanisms underlying a possible relationship between organizational support and personal growth initiative is another issue that needs examination. It is assumed that organizational support might influence personal growth initiative through self-efficacy. In the organizational research literature, there is evidence reporting that the perceived organizational support might have an influence on employees' self-efficacy beliefs (Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2014). As Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) argue, organizational support increases employees' interests in their work by supporting their self-efficacy beliefs. Organizational support which includes providing positive feedback to the employees about their performance helps the employees be more open to competency requiring experiences. In addition to being an outcome of organizational support, several empirical studies demonstrated that self-efficacy is an antecedent to many organizational outcomes such as proactive work behavior (Parker et al., 2006; Ohly and Fritz 2007; Parker and Collins, 2010) and general performance (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). Furthermore, recent studies demonstrated that self-efficacy influences personal growth initiative (Çankaya et al., 2017; Ogunyemi and Mabekoje, 2007; Sharma and Rani, 2014; Stewart, 2014). This might be explained with the Social Cognitive Theory, which argues that people with high self-efficacy are more prone to take action and more insistent in their efforts (Wood and Bandura, 1989). Thus, it is assumed that it is more likely for the people with high self-efficacy to be more proactive in growth and change.

In brief, it is vitally important to investigate faculty members' personal growth initiative level in today's competitive work life and determine the factors playing a role in it. It is believed that the employees feeling the support of their organizations will care more about their personal growth, and moreover, it is predicted that as a possible outcome of organizational support and predictor of personal growth initiative, self-efficacy will play a mediating role between the two. As far as the extant literature shows, there is a dearth of research about personal growth initiative of working people (Joo et al., 2020; Matsuo, 2019; Srivastava and Singh, 2020) and most of the research focused on fields of education and psychology (e.g. Beri and Jain, 2016; Luyckx and Robitschek, 2014; Malik et al., 2013; Shigemoto, Ashton and Robitschek, 2016). The research in Turkey is limited to a few (Abacı and Okyay, 2013; Büyükgöze, 2015; Çelik, 2015) and they focused on students (Abacı and Okyay, 2013; Büyükgöze, 2015). In the foreign and Turkish research literature, it was observed that no previous study had investigated personal growth initiative of faculty members, and little research had been conducted on the possible organizational predictors of personal growth initiative (Joo et al., 2020). In this regard, there are mainly two important areas where this research makes an original contribution to the personal growth initiative literature. The research fills a gap in the literature by exploring faculty members' personal

growth initiative and enhancing our understanding about how organizational factors influence it.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Personal Growth Initiative*

As indicated above, personal growth initiative is a positive and proactive attitude towards change and constant improvement (Robitschek, 1998). According to Robitschek et al. (2012), who developed the first scale of the construct, personal growth initiative has four components named as 'readiness for change', 'planfulness', 'using resources', and 'intentional behavior'. Readiness for change means to be ready to realize self-change; planfulness indicates knowledge about the planning process needed for self-change and its implementation; using resources signifies adopting the outside resources that will be helpful in self-change, and intentional behavior means purposefully engaging in actions that will help the self-change (Robitschek et al., 2012). Readiness for change and planfulness are the cognitive components including beliefs, attitudes and values about growth initiative. People with a high cognition of personal growth initiative know how and when they will change, and set realistic goals for change (Robitschek, 1998). Using resources and intentional behavior are the behavioral components focusing on action-oriented growth. People with strong behavioral orientation can make use of available outside sources and initiate the behaviors intended for personal growth (Robitschek, 1998; Robitschek et al., 2012).

The previous research has established that personal growth initiative influences a number of positive outcomes. People with high personal growth initiative levels can easily adapt to different situations, can cope up with stressful situations better, have higher life satisfaction levels, and can look for the right solutions for the problems they face (Loo et al., 2014; Robitschek et al., 2012; Weigold et al., 2013). High personal growth initiative has positive relations with higher positive affection, and negative relations with anxiety, depression and negative affection (Hardin et al., 2007; Robitschek and Keyes, 2009). Moreover, there are positive relations between self-respect (Kashubeck-West and Meyer, 2008), self-awareness (Neff et al., 2007) and personal growth initiative. When the organizational research is examined, it was observed that personal growth initiative is in positive relations with employees' determinism, career exploration and subjective well-being (Robitschek, 1998; Shorey et al., 2007). A study in the USA showed that personal growth initiative has a positive effect on job crafting in different occupations (Matsuo, 2019); another study in South Korea with a telecommunication firm employees reported that person-organization fit and work empowerment are significant antecedents of personal growth initiative (Joo et al., 2020). A study with working parents in Taiwan showed that work-family experience (work-family conflict and strength) predicted personal growth initiative (Wang et al., 2015). Srivastava and Singh (2020) found positive relations among personal growth initiative, organizational engagement and employee commitment with the hotel employees in the Northern India. It is concluded that the personal growth initiative

literature has largely focused on the outcomes of it, and there are a limited number of studies about its organizational antecedents. However, as Lewin (1936) proposed in his Field Theory, behaviors are the function of a person with a past, personality and motivation and the environment composed of its physical and social fields. In this frame, perceived organizational support might be viewed as one of the environmental factors that might have an influence on personal growth initiative.

### *Organizational Support*

Eisenberger et al. (1989) defined perceived organizational support as employees' general perception regarding the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. Özdevecioğlu (2004) explained it as employees' feeling the organization's power at their back. Organizational Support Theory rooted in Social Exchange Theory is a modern exchange theory arguing that employees exhibit positive work outputs in return for the payments, training, socio-affective support they receive from the organization (Michael et al., 2005). According to the Organizational Support Theory, employees personify organizations and attribute humanistic features onto the organizations. When the organization is personified, employees perceive positive or negative treatment from their organizations as indicators of support or rejection by the organization (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) suggest that in accordance with the reciprocity norm, when organizational support is perceived, employees want to exhibit extra-role behaviors which will contribute to the organizational goals and feel an urge to commit to their organizations (Zhang et al., 2017). Empirical evidence reports that perceived organizational support affects employee well-being, positive disposition for organization and work, and behavioral outcomes in benefit of organization's welfare (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). Edwards and Peccei (2010) evidenced that organizational support was a significant predictor of organizational engagement, organizational participation, and turnover intent. In their meta-analysis Ahmed et al. (2015) found that organizational support had a significant effect on engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intent. Organizational support might be one of the antecedents of personal growth initiative in many ways. Personal growth initiative might be evaluated as a behavioral outcome benefiting organizational welfare. Within the frame of Social Exchange Theory employees feeling the support of their organization which value employee contributions will have a positive stance towards change and development which will be to the advantage of both themselves and organizations; and moreover, they will think that they will find the support that they will need in change and development processes. Organizational support might have either direct effect or indirect effect through underlying mechanisms on personal growth initiative. One of these underlying mechanisms might be self-efficacy which is indicated as one of the organizational support outcomes (Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2014) and antecedents of personal growth initiative (Ogunyemi and Mabejoke, 2007).

### *General Self-Efficacy*

Self-efficacy construct developed by Bandura in his Social Cognitive Theory can be defined as individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to realize the behaviors needed for the desired outcomes, their judgments about their skills and ability to handle their environment (Bandura, 1977; Lönnfjord and Hagquist, 2018). Self-efficacy affects how individuals feel, what they think, how they motivate themselves and how they behave. When the self-efficacy beliefs are high, individuals increase the goals they set for themselves and their beliefs in themselves and their determination augments. It was elaborated that self-efficacy had positive effects on various behavioral and attitudinal work outcomes such as work engagement (Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2014); performance (Judge and Bono, 2001; Prussia et al., 1998); job crafting and work enjoyment (Judge and Bono, 2001); job satisfaction, task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Özyılmaz et al., 2018) Although self-efficacy has generally been evaluated as an outcome variable, environmental factors can influence self-efficacy perceptions. According to Kurtessis et al. (2015), one of those environmental factors is organizational support. As Social Cognitive Theory argues, employees change their perceptions in line with their perceptions; it might be argued that their beliefs in how efficient they are can be fostered in a supportive environment. As Bandura (2000) posits, self-efficacy perceptions are nourished by four sources which are active competency experiences, secondary experiences, verbal persuasion and physical and emotional states. Organizational support can foster self-efficacy perception by inducing many of these sources (Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2014).

In this research it is suggested that organizational support might influence personal growth initiative through self-efficacy perceptions. Because the literature shows that self-efficacy which is an outcome of organizational support is an important antecedent to personal growth initiative (Beri and Jain, 2016; Çankaya et al., 2017; Çelik, 2015; Ogunyemi and Mabejoke, 2007; Sanders et al., 2016; Sharma and Rani, 2013). Sharma and Rani (2014, 2013) found that all the four components of personal growth initiative had positive relations with general self-efficacy dimensions. Weigold et al., (2013) reported that all components of personal growth initiative have high relations with personal resources such as self-efficacy. In short, self-efficacy is a possible outcome of organizational support and antecedent to personal growth initiative, and therefore in this research it is argued that organizational support will affect personal growth initiative through self-efficacy.

### **Purpose of the research**

There are two primary aims of this study: 1. To investigate the relationship between organizational support perceptions and personal growth initiative levels of the faculty members working in Turkey and 2. To examine the effect of self-efficacy perceptions in this relationship. In line with these aims the study inquires about the following hypotheses:

### *Hypotheses of the study*

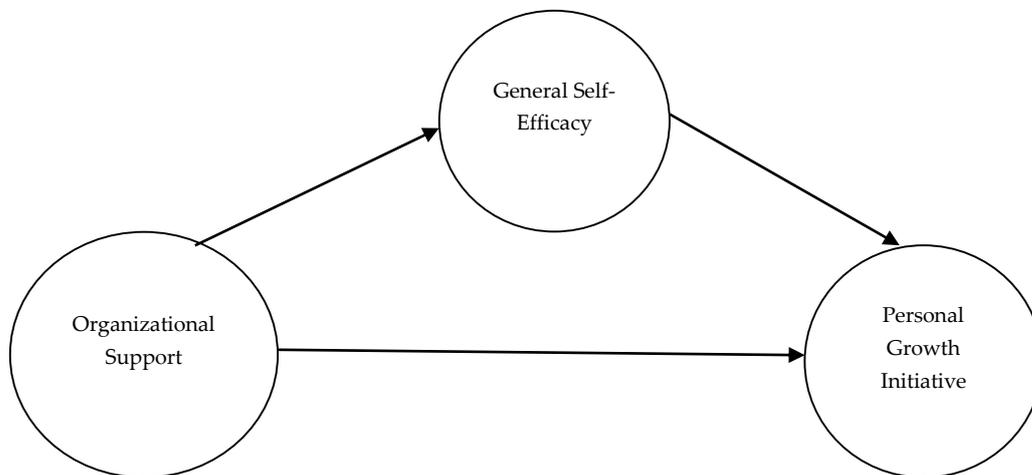
**H1:** Faculty members' organizational support perceptions have a significant effect on their personal growth initiative levels.

**H2:** Faculty members' organizational support perceptions have a significant effect on their self-efficacy perceptions.

**H3:** Faculty members' self-efficacy perceptions have a significant effect on their personal growth initiative levels.

**H4:** Faculty members' self-efficacy perceptions have a mediating effect on the relationship between their organizational support perceptions and personal growth initiative levels.

**Test model for the research hypotheses was developed as such:**



**Figure 1.** Theoretical Model of the Research

## **METHOD**

### *Research Model*

This research was designed as a relational survey model. Relational survey model is a survey approach which aims to determine whether there is a common change in two variables (Karasar, 2011). In this research the relation between faculty members' organizational support perceptions and personal growth initiative, and the effect of self-efficacy beliefs in this relationship were examined.

### *Participants*

The population of this research consisted of all the faculty members working in state universities in Turkey - professors, associate professor doctors, assistant professor doctors, lecturers and research assistants. Turkish Higher Education Council statistics shows that the number of faculty members in state universities in Turkey was 153.518 in 2021-2022 academic year (istatistik.yok.gov.tr). From this population, 346 faculty members,

communicated on voluntary participation basis and convenience sampling technique, comprised the research sample. Descriptive features of the sample are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participants*

Variable	Group	n	f	Total
Gender	Female	143	41.3 %	346
	Male	203	58.6 %	
Age	24-35	118	34 %	346
	36-45	164	47.3 %	
	45+	64	18.4 %	
Title	Research Assistant	59	17 %	346
	Lecturer (Teaching)	90	26 %	
	Lecturer (Non-teaching)	11	3 %	
	Assistant Professor Doctor	110	31.9 %	
	Associate Professor Doctor	60	17.3 %	
Work Experience	Professor Doctor	16	4.6 %	346
	1-5 years	93	26.8 %	
	6-10 years	88	25.4 %	
	11-15 years	106	30.6 %	
	16-20 years	24	6.9 %	
	21-25 years	22	6.3 %	
	26+ years	13	3.7 %	

As seen in Table 1, assistant professors composed the biggest group in the sample (%31,9). The faculty members' work experience was mostly between 11 and 15 years (%30,7). In addition to the information provided in the table, the distribution of faculty members according to their scientific field was in this order: education (n= 104), social sciences, journalism and information (n= 98), health and welfare (n= 47), art and human sciences (n= 29), engineering, production and construction (n= 28), nature sciences, mathematics and statistics (n= 15), business, management and law (n= 13), agriculture, forestry, fishery and veterinary (n= 6), informatics and communication technologies (n= 5), services (n= 3). (The fields were determined in accordance with ISCED 2013).

### *Data Collection Tools*

In this research three scales were applied in addition to demographic information questions. The first one was the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1989), and adapted to Turkish by Aypay (2010). This Likert-type scale has 10 items, assessed on 5 points. GSES has two dimensions as "effort and resilience", and "competence and confidence". The highest score of the scale is 50 points; the higher score means the participants feel more self-efficient. A sample item from the scale is "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough."

In order to measure the organizational support, Perceived Organizational Support Scale (POSS) developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986) and adapted to Turkish by Deniz-Giray and Şahin (2012) was used. The Likert-type scale has one dimension, 8 items, 4 of which (1,4,6,8) are positive and the other 4 (2,3,5,7) are negative sentences. The highest score of the scale is 40 points; the higher score means the participants perceive more support from their organizations. A sample item from the scale is “The organization values my contribution to its well-being.”

Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II (PGIS-II) developed by Robitschek et al. (2012) and adapted to Turkish by Yalçın and Malkoç (2013) was used to measure faculty members' personal growth initiative levels. The scale is composed of four dimensions and has 16 items. The dimensions of this scale are named as “readiness for change”, “planfulness”, “use of resources” and “intentional behavior”. The highest score of the scale is 80 points; the higher score means the participants believe themselves to be more initiative for growth. A sample item from the scale is “I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself.”

### *Data Analysis*

The research data was gathered from the state universities in Turkey through an online form, on a voluntary participation basis and informed consent. SPSS 26 and AMOS 24 package programs were used in the analysis process. In the analysis part, normality tests, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, Pearson Moment correlation coefficient calculations were employed as descriptive analyses, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to examine the structural relations among the variables. In this research the direct effect of faculty members' organizational support perceptions on personal growth initiative levels, and the indirect effect of it through self-efficacy were tested. SEM is a useful analysis technique which enables examining the relations among different variables and testing the direct and indirect effects of input variables on outputs. Bootstrap technique (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) was used in calculating the effect size of the relations, confidence intervals of the paths and significance levels. In comparing the effect sizes, standardized estimation scores were examined. Bootstrap technique can estimate the indirect effect of input variable on output variable by 95% confidence intervals. In the research, 2000 sample Bootstrap analyses were employed in calculating the total, direct and indirect effects of the variables by 95% confidence intervals. The effect of the mediating variable is evaluated on the basis of the significance level of the relationship between predictor/independent variable and the outcome/dependent variable when the mediating variable is introduced in the model. If the relationship between the predictor/independent and the outcome/dependent variable reduces when the mediating variable is introduced, there is a “partial mediation”; if the relationship becomes insignificant, there is a “full mediation” (MacKinnon et al., 2007).

### *Ethical considerations*

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the

actions stated under the title "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were not taken.

Ethical review board name: Mardin Artuklu University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board

Date of ethics review decision: 16.03.2022

Ethics assessment document issue number: 2022/3-3

## RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and reliability analysis were run on the scales of the variables before the model testing. The acceptable scores of the fit index were taken as  $\chi^2/df \leq 5$ ;  $RMSEA \leq 0.08$ ;  $GFI \geq 0.90$ ;  $NFI \geq 0.90$ ;  $IFI \geq 0.90$ ;  $CFI \geq 0.90$  (Kelloway, 1998; Kline, 2011; Şimşek, 2007). It was observed that GSES, POSS and PGIS-II had acceptable fit index values. Cronbach alpha coefficients and fit index values are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Fit Index Values of the Scales*

	$\alpha$	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI
GSES	0.90	2.90	0.08	0.95	0.95	0.96	0.96
POSS	0.93	3.2	0.08	0.96	0.97	0.98	0.98
PGIS-II	0.92	3.54	0.08	0.90	0.92	0.94	0.95

As shown in Table 2 Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scales were high; CFA and Cronbach alpha coefficients showed that the scales were valid and reliable.

After validity and reliability analysis, descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted in the variables and scale dimensions in the model. When the data were analyzed for normality, it was seen that skewness and kurtosis values for each scale were between -2 and +2, which are considered acceptable in order to prove normal univariate distribution (George and Mallery, 2010). (GSES skewness= -.310, kurtosis= -.024; POSS skewness= -.088, kurtosis= -.663; PGIS-II skewness= -.172, kurtosis= -.578). The mean scores of the scales varied from 3.20 (perceived organizational support) to 4.27 (General self-efficacy, competency and confidence dimension). It was found that faculty members' general self-efficacy beliefs were high (mean= 4.11, sd= 0.56), organizational support perceptions were on average (mean= 3.20, sd= 1.01), and personal growth initiative levels were high (mean= 4.12, sd= 0.55). In Table 3, descriptive statistics and correlations were provided for the variables.

**Table 3**

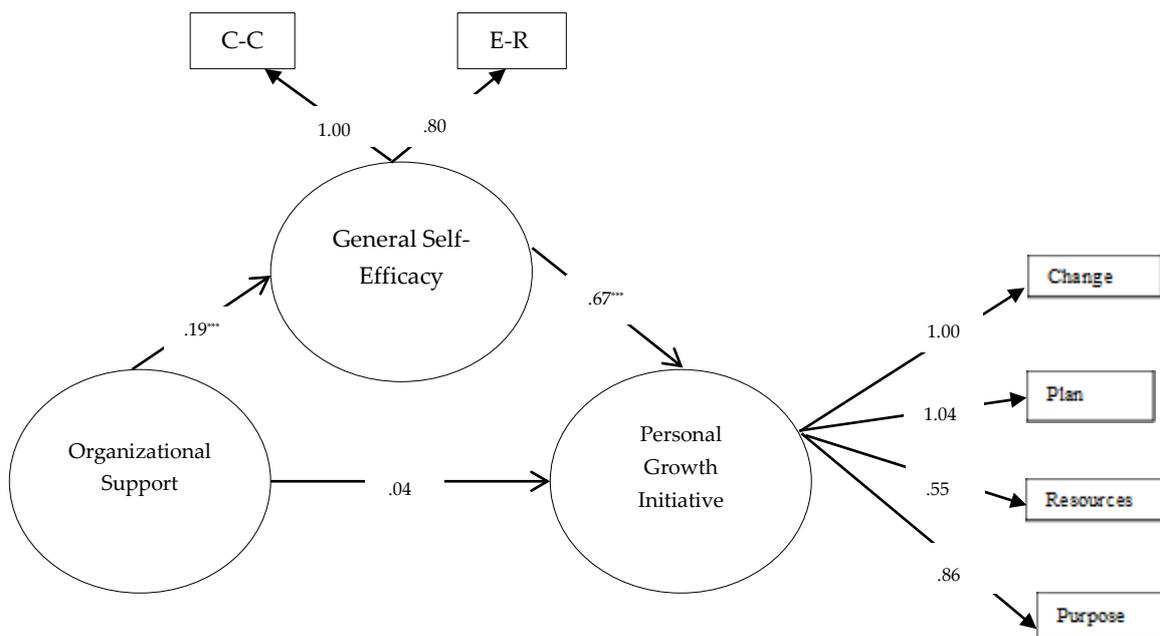
*Descriptive Statistics and Correlational Results of the Variables*

	GSE	E & R	C & C	OS	PGI	Chan.	Plan	Resou.	Purp.
<b>GSE</b>	-								
<b>E &amp; R</b>	.974**	-							
<b>C &amp; C</b>	.915**	.801**	-						
<b>OS</b>	.267**	.250**	.261**	-					
<b>PGI</b>	.616**	.599**	.565**	.280**	-				
<b>Chan.</b>	.603**	.586**	.554**	.244**	.905**	-			
<b>Plan</b>	.636**	.620**	.581**	.237**	.918**	.885**	-		
<b>Resou.</b>	.272**	.265**	.248**	.176**	.635**	.411**	.371**	-	
<b>Purp.</b>	.508**	.493**	.469**	.276**	.865**	.687**	.739**	.442**	-
<b>Mean</b>	4.11	4.00	4.27	3.20	4.12	4.18	4.19	3.77	4.21
<b>Standard deviation</b>	.56	.63	.53	1.01	.55	.62	.62	.75	.64

\*\* p<.01, GSE: General self-efficacy; E & R: Effort and resilience; C & C: Competence and confidence; OS: Organizational support; PGI: Personal growth initiative; Chan.: Readiness for change; Plan: Planfulness; Resou.: Using resources; Purp: Purposeful behavior

When the correlation values in Table 3 were examined, it was observed that there was a weak but significant positive correlation between faculty members’ general self-efficacy beliefs and organizational support perceptions ( $r=.267, p <.01$ ); there was a high significant positive correlation between general self-efficacy and personal growth initiative levels ( $r=.616, p <.01$ ); and between organizational support perceptions and personal growth initiative levels there was a weak but significant positive correlation ( $r=.280, p <.01$ ).

In order to test the research hypotheses SEM was conducted to test the effect of faculty members’ organizational support perceptions on their personal growth initiative levels and the mediating role of self-efficacy in this relation. First of all, the fit of the model was tested and it was observed that fit index values of the test model were within the good levels ( $\chi^2/df=2.35$ ; RMSEA=.06; TLI=.96; IFI=.97; CFI=.97). This finding led to the conclusion that the test model was in good fit with the data. Test model with the standardized values was presented below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** SEM Results for the Structural Relations among the Variables

\*\*  $p < .01$ , E & R: Effort and resilience; C & C: Competence and confidence; Change: Readiness for change; Plan: Planfulness; Resources: Using resources; Purpose: Purposeful behavior

After the test model was verified, the research hypotheses were tested by the latent variable model. Bootstrap based regression analysis was applied in order to test the mediating role of general self-efficacy beliefs in the effect of the faculty members' organizational support perceptions on their personal growth initiative levels. In Table 4 below, total, direct and indirect effects among organizational support, personal growth initiative and general self-efficacy beliefs were provided.

**Table 4**

*Bootstrap Results for Organizational Support, Personal Growth Initiative and General Self-Efficacy Model*

Construct	Standardized Estimate	Product of Coefficients		95% Bootstrap CI		R <sup>2</sup>	p
		SE	Z	Lower	Upper		
Standardized total effects							
OS→PGI	.282	.057	-	.171	.397	-	***
Standardized direct effects							
OS→GSE	.316	.034	5.462	.210	.429	.100	***
GSE→PGI	.676	.054	12.409	.577	.758	-	***
OS→PGI	.068	.027	1.447	-.028	.163	.490	.148
Standardized indirect effects							
OS→GSE→PGI	.214	.041	-	.079	.180	-	***

GSE: General self-efficacy; OS: Organizational support; PGI: Personal growth initiative

As shown in Table 4, standardized total effect in the relation paths evidenced that faculty members' organizational support perceptions had a significant direct effect on their personal growth initiative levels ( $\beta = 0.282$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. This finding shows that as faculty members' organizational support perceptions get higher, they would be more willing to pursue personal growth. When the standardized relation paths were examined, it was seen that organizational support perceptions had a significant effect on general self-efficacy beliefs ( $\beta = 0.316$ ,  $p < .001$ ). So, Hypothesis 2 was supported, too. This finding implies that faculty members' self-efficacy beliefs might be influenced by the organizational support they receive. Furthermore, when the effect of general self-efficacy beliefs on personal growth initiative levels was examined, a significant effect was observed ( $\beta = 0.679$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hence, the third hypothesis was confirmed. This finding indicates that faculty members with higher self-efficacy beliefs might tend to invest in their growth more. However, it was found that the effect of organizational support was not significant when self-efficacy was included in the model as a mediator variable ( $\beta = 0.068$ ,  $p > .001$ ). The bootstrapping analysis results showed that organizational support had a significant positive indirect effect on personal growth initiative through the mediation of general self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.214$ ,  $p < .001$ ). By this result it was evidenced that faculty members' self-efficacy beliefs fully mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and personal growth initiative levels. This finding supported Hypothesis 4.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between faculty members' organizational support perceptions and their personal growth initiative levels, and to examine the mediating role of general self-efficacy beliefs in this relationship. The first hypothesis suggesting the effect of organizational support on personal growth interest was supported, which provides evidence for organizational support theory. According to organizational support theory people personalize organizations by attributing human characteristics to them and build positive social exchange relations with the supportive organizations (Eisenberger et al., 2001). According to the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) organizational support creates a feeling of task responsibility on the individuals so that they want to contribute in the organizational development and effectiveness (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In other words, those who perceive the support of their organization feel an urge to respond by exhibiting positive attitudes and behaviors towards the organization (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). In this frame, it might be said that organizational support enhances a proactive attitude towards a constant personal change and development, which is personal growth initiative; employees respond in a positive way to the support by developing themselves. Employees' positive responses to organizational support were reported in various research. For example, organizational support predicts an increase in affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors (Hayton et al., 2012; Kurtessis et al., 2015), and a decrease in absence, turnover intent (Kalemci-Tuzun and Kalemci, 2012) and deviant behaviors (Van Emmeri, et al., 2007; Geddes and Stickney, 2011). In addition to the outcomes of reciprocity and social exchange, the perception of organizational support help employees think that they can reach the support in time of need (Cohen and Wills, 1985) this increase emotional and psychological resources they use in dealing with daily stress and decrease their vulnerability to stress (Jex, 1998). In this vein, it might be said that organizational support contributes to employees' resources which could be useful in handling the challenges of the change and growth, and this is why organizational support influences personal growth initiative in a positive way.

Another hypothesis supported by the research was that faculty members' organizational support perceptions had an effect on general self-efficacy beliefs. An explanation for this result might lie in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) which suggests that employees construct their beliefs according to their perceptions and with a supportive environment perception they start to believe in themselves. Bandura (2000) argues that people's beliefs in their efficacy are improved by four main sources of influence, including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional states. As Caesens and Stinglhamber (2014) points out, organizational support develops people's self-efficacy beliefs by influencing these four sources. Because human acts are not simply the result of their own decision but of the interplay among internal variables, behaviors and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). Similarly, self-efficacy is a product of internal variables, people's behavior and the environmental factors affecting these behaviors

(Bandura, 2012). It can be inferred that organizational support is one of the environmental factors increasing one's self-efficacy belief. The research, although limited in number, shows that those who feel the support of their organizations and to be valued have a higher level of self-efficacy (Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2014; Kurtessis et al., 2015). In addition to support, other organizational factors were reported to have an effect on self-efficacy beliefs. For example, learning organization culture (Song et al., 2018), supervisor incivility (Alola et al., 2018), coaching (Moen and Allgood, 2009), social organization (Lee et al., 1991), employee cooperation (Chester and Beaudin, 1996), organizational learning and climate (Tobin et al., 2006) were found to have relations with employee self-efficacy. Hox's (2002) argument, which suggests that individuals interact with the social context they belong to, is in the same line with this finding.

As another result of the research, it was observed that self-efficacy played a mediating effect on the relationship between organizational support and personal growth initiative, and this result supported the final hypothesis explaining the underlying mechanism in the relationship. The full mediation of self-efficacy in this relationship can also be explained with the arguments of the Social Cognitive Theory. According to Bandura (1997) people with high self-efficacy are more likely to undertake more challenging tasks, they set higher goals and commit to them. Behaviors are planned in mind and when they are enacted people with high self-efficacy put more effort and resist longer compared to those with low self-efficacy; when they face a barrier they can recuperate faster and commit to their goals. Henson (2001) argues that the importance of self-efficacy is in the effects it has on people's choices and behaviors. Self-efficacy plays a key role in enhancing success and motivation. The effect of self-efficacy on personal growth initiative is in line with the previous research. Sharma and Rani (2013) reported that 13 % of the personal growth initiative scores were explained with self-efficacy. Similarly, Ogunyemi and Mabekoje (2007) found that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of personal growth initiative. Stewart (2014) concluded that emotional self-efficacy had an effect on personal growth initiative. Self-efficacy contributes to personal and professional growth by influencing people's preferences about their behaviors and the environment they want to interact with. In this manner, people determine how they live and what they want to be. To sum up, it might be said that people with high self-efficacy have a higher motivation for personal growth. Another point underlined by Social Cognitive Theory is that people are active practitioners in their life; that is they are neither the agents of internal mechanisms nor the passive recipients of environmental influence (Bandura, 2012). This approach might be interpreted for this research in that self-efficacy plays a role on personal growth interest as an internal mechanism and organizational support plays its role on it as an external mechanism.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite being pioneer research investigating faculty members' personal growth initiative and explaining the effect of organizational and individual variables on it, the research bears some limitations. The first limitation is that the research was based on cross-sectional data, which might cause a higher correlation among the variables and so harm the causality. In order to overcome this limitation, it is recommended the future research be based on longitudinal data. By this way, the researchers can observe the causal relations better. Another limitation is about the sampling technique applied in the research. This study which applied the convenient sampling technique is limited in generalizability. The researchers can conduct new ones with the faculty members of the universities with different ranks and sizes. Besides, investigating organizational support perceptions, general self-efficacy beliefs, personal growth initiative levels and the relations among them in different cultural contexts can increase generalizability. Another limitation is about the analysis methods, which interpret all the participants in the same cluster. That is, the participants are in different stages of their career but in the research, they were treated as a whole unit. However, faculty members at their different career stages could have different growth attitudes. In this respect, the research investigating the personal growth initiatives of those in different stages can add valuable findings to the literature. Lastly, further research can be made on other personal or environmental variables, such as locus of control, leadership styles, organizational thrust, psychological capital, social support that can play a predictor, mediator or moderator role on personal growth initiative. In addition to these variables, when the effect of self-efficacy on personal growth initiative is taken into account, it can be very useful to investigate other organizational variables that might have an effect on self-efficacy.

Beside research recommendations, there are practical recommendations for university managers. As aforementioned, in this research it was suggested and supported that faculty members' organizational support perceptions and self-efficacy beliefs were antecedents of their personal growth initiative levels. Hence the first step that might be taken by the managers at the universities is to look into the ways by which the organizational support can be increased. Although there is not a one-fit-all solution to increase organizational support, university managers can start with developing their 1-on-1 communication with their team, because it might help strengthening the relationships between the leader and their teams, and give an opportunity for providing personalized and meaningful feedback. In order to enhance faculty members' self-efficacy beliefs university managers can apply coaching and mentoring plans, set appropriate, attainable goals, and provide training and education opportunities for them. In addition, it is very important that university managers themselves convey the right message about personal growth. It is known that a high number of work attitudes and behaviors have a top-down effect. It can be recommended for university managers to inquire how much effort they put on their growth and if they value the members' who are keen on initiating their growth. Not only the tangible but the

intangible rewards, such simple as acknowledging success, might help faculty members' being more prone to develop themselves.

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